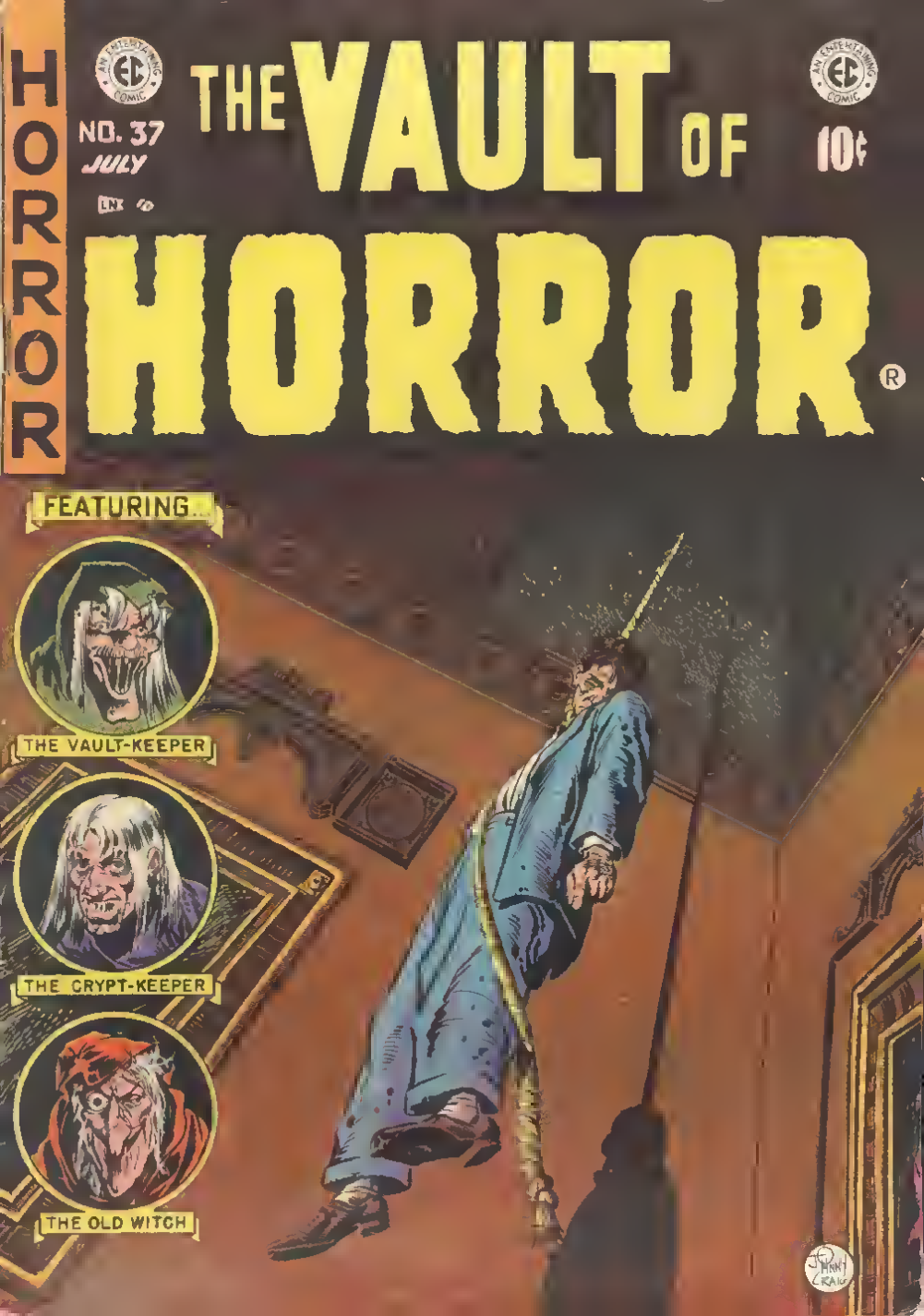

HORROR
AN ENTERTAINING COMIC
NO. 37
JULY
10¢
THE VAULT OF HORROR®
FEATURING...
THE VAULT-KEEPER
THE CRYPT-KEEPER
THE OLD WITCH
JOHNNY CRAIG

THE NEWSDEALERS OF AMERICA ARE SCREAMING...

BECAUSE, WITH JUST ONE DAY'S DISPLAY...

POOF!

THERE GOES PANIC!

SO IF YOU'RE *SELF CONSCIOUS* IN A *B.O. (BUYING OUT)* CROWD... IF *PANIC* GOES *POOF!* TOO QUICKLY WHERE YOU BROWSE... IF YOU'D RATHER NOT *PERSPIRE* TILL THE *NEXT ISSUE* COMES IN... THEN *SUBSCRIBE!* FILL OUT THE *COUPON*, ENCLOSE *ONE DOLLAR* FOR *EIGHT* (8) ISSUES, AND *MAIL!* JUST GIVE THE ENVELOPE A *GENTLE SQUEEZE*, AND *POOF!*.. SAY GOODBYE TO *ORDER PROBLEMS!* THE ONLY THING YOU'LL HAVE *LEFT* TO WORRY ABOUT THEN IS AN *OFFENSIVE MAILMAN!*

THE PANICKY EDITORS OF PANIC
ROOM 706
225 LAFAYETTE STREET
N.Y.C. 12, N.Y.

I ENCLOSE ONE DOLLAR ($1.00). PLEASE RUSH ME THE NEXT EIGHT DEODORIZED ISSUES OF *PANIC*. I WANT TO SAY *'POOF!'* TO MY FRIENDS!

NAME _____

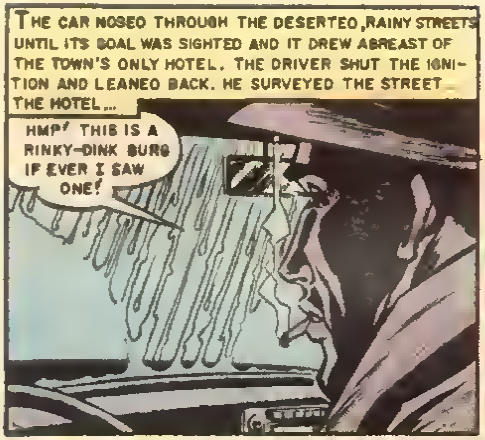
ADDRESS _____

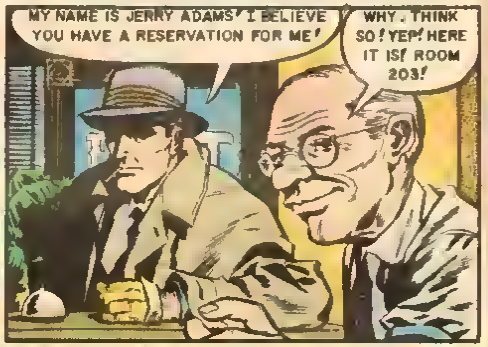
CITY _____ ZONE NO. ___ STATE _____

VAULT OF HORROR, June July 1954—Volume 1 Number 37 Published Bi Monthly by L. L. Publishing Co., Inc., at 225 Lafayette Street, New York 12, N. Y. William M. Gaines, Managing Editor Johnny Craig, Editor Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office at New York, N. Y. Subscription $ Issues for $1 in the U. S. elsewhere $1.25 Entire contents copyrighted 1954 by L. L. Publishing Co., Inc Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by stamped return envelope No similarity between any of the characters names or persons appearing in this magazine with any of those living or dead is intended and any similarity is purely coincidental Printed in U.S.A.

THE VAULT OF HORROR!®

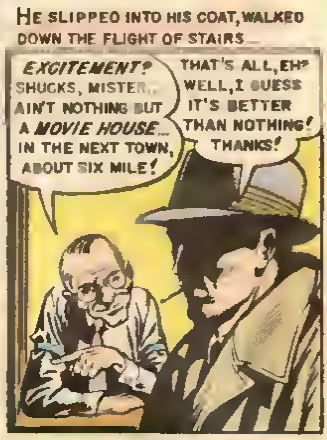
HEH, HEH! WELL, HERE WE GO AGAIN! IT'S TIME FOR ANOTHER GRUESOME WHIRLWIND OF *TERROR!* AH, YES! THE *SADISTIC EVIL* TRAPPED IN THE VOLUMINOUS CONFINES OF *THE VAULT* HAVE ONCE AGAIN BEEN UNLEASHED TO *PLAGUE* AND *MYSTIFY* YOU! THE AWSOME MAGNITUDE OF THE *POWERS OF DARKNESS* WILL ONCE MORE—OH! PARDON ME FOR BEING SO *RUDE!* I NEGLECTED TO INTRODUCE MY *COMPANION!* HEH, HEH! FIENDS, I WANT YOU TO MEET *ORUSILLA ... HOSTESS OF THE VAULT OF HORROR!* YOU MAY RECALL SEEING HER BEFORE.. SHE'S BEEN GLIDING IN AND OUT OF THIS PLACE FOR SOME TIME! I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE NICE TO HAVE HER STAND AROUND LOOKING BEAUTIFUL! HEH, HEH! ANYWAY...LET'S GET ON WITH THE *HAIR-RAISER* CALLED..

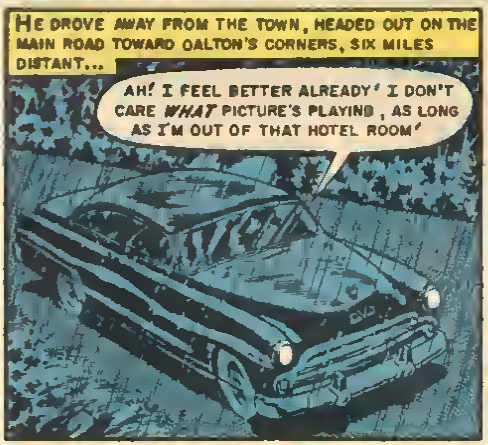

THE CAR NOSED THROUGH THE DESERTED, RAINY STREETS UNTIL ITS GOAL WAS SIGHTED AND IT DREW ABREAST OF THE TOWN'S ONLY HOTEL. THE DRIVER SHUT THE IGNITION AND LEANED BACK. HE SURVEYED THE STREET... THE HOTEL...
HMP! THIS IS A RINKY-DINK BURG IF EVER I SAW ONE!

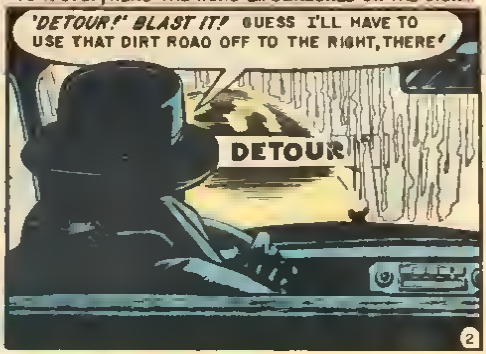

WITH AN EFFORT HE STEPPED FROM THE CAR, HUNCHING HIS SHOULDERS AGAINST THE RAIN. HE LIFTED A SUITCASE AND BROUGHT IT INTO THE SLEEPING HOTEL, PLACED IT ON THE FLOOR BEFORE THE DESK CLERK
MY NAME IS JERRY ADAMS! I BELIEVE YOU HAVE A RESERVATION FOR ME!
WHY, THINK SO! YEP! HERE IT IS! ROOM 203!

AN HOUR LATER HE WAS PACING HIS ROOM LIKE A CAGED ANIMAL...
THIS HICK TOWN IS ENOUGH TO DRIVE A GUY NUTS! IT'S ONLY 9:30 AND ALREADY THE PLACE IS DEAD!

THE PEOPLE MUST DO SOMETHING FOR EXCITEMENT! MAYBE THE DESK-CLERK WILL HAVE AN IDEA! I CAN'T JUST STARE AT THESE WALLS ALL EVENING!

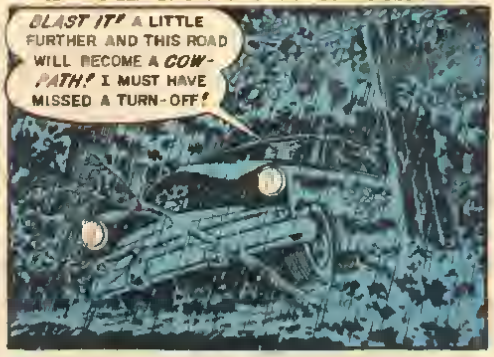

HE SLIPPED INTO HIS COAT, WALKED DOWN THE FLIGHT OF STAIRS...
EXCITEMENT? SHUCKS, MISTER... AIN'T NOTHING BUT A MOVIE HOUSE... IN THE NEXT TOWN, ABOUT SIX MILE!
THAT'S ALL, EH? WELL, I GUESS IT'S BETTER THAN NOTHING! THANKS!


HE DROVE AWAY FROM THE TOWN, HEADED OUT ON THE MAIN ROAD TOWARD DALTON'S CORNERS, SIX MILES DISTANT...
AH! I FEEL BETTER ALREADY! I DON'T CARE WHAT PICTURE'S PLAYING, AS LONG AS I'M OUT OF THAT HOTEL ROOM!

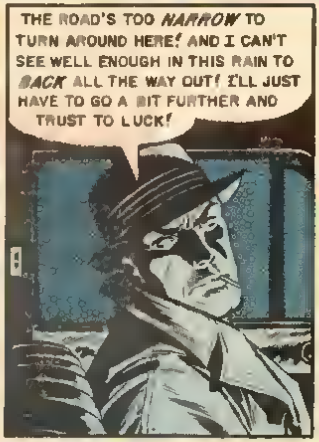

THE CAR KNIFED THROUGH THE DOWNPOUR FOR MANY MINUTES UNTIL ITS HEADLIGHTS PICKED OUT AN OBJECT IN THE ROAD AHEAD. JERRY ADAMS BRAKED THE CAR TO A STOP, READ THE WORD EMBLAZONED ON THE SIGN...
'DETOUR!' BLAST IT! GUESS I'LL HAVE TO USE THAT DIRT ROAD OFF TO THE RIGHT, THERE!
DETOUR

He slammed the car into gear, turned onto the side road. He went slowly, easing the car through the clusters of branches that draped from overhanging trees and scraped against the windows...

The gutted, muddy road wound endlessly upward through dense fog banks, thick foliage. And as he progressed, Jerry found the road narrowing, the trees and leaves crowding in on both sides.

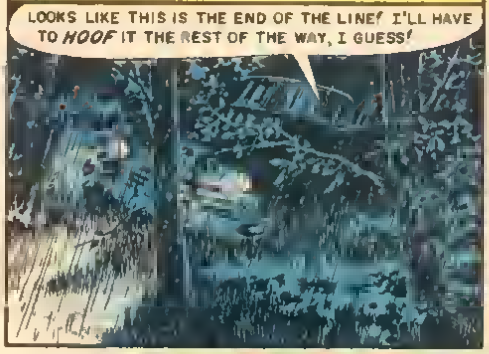


He stopped the car. Angrily he drew a map from the glove compartment and pored over it

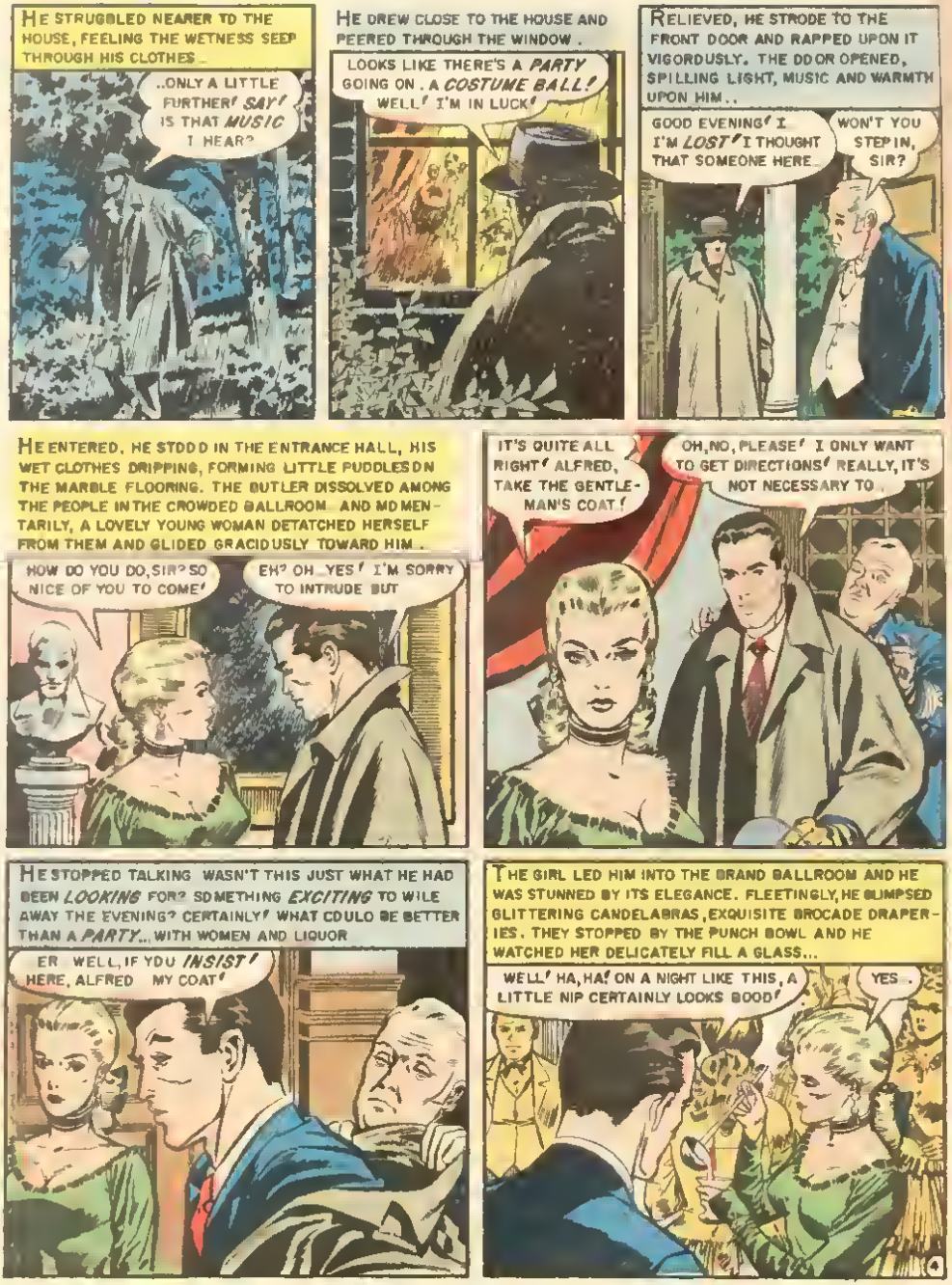


Once again he steered the car forward...only to stop again fifty yards later...

The car cautiously moved through the ancient gate...up the estate road, overgrown with weeds, that finally petered out and dissolved into the undergrowth...



Greatly annoyed, he switched off the ignition and stepped from the car. He buttoned his coat against the rain and started toward the house...


HE STRUGGLED NEARER TO THE HOUSE, FEELING THE WETNESS SEEP THROUGH HIS CLOTHES..
..ONLY A LITTLE FURTHER! SAY! IS THAT MUSIC I HEAR?
HE DREW CLOSE TO THE HOUSE AND PEERED THROUGH THE WINDOW.
LOOKS LIKE THERE'S A PARTY GOING ON. A COSTUME BALL! WELL! I'M IN LUCK!
RELIEVED, HE STRODE TO THE FRONT DOOR AND RAPPED UPON IT VIGORDUSLY. THE DOOR OPENED, SPILLING LIGHT, MUSIC AND WARMTH UPON HIM..
GOOD EVENING! I... I'M LOST! I THOUGHT THAT SOMEONE HERE...
WON'T YOU STEP IN, SIR?
HE ENTERED. HE STOOD IN THE ENTRANCE HALL, HIS WET CLOTHES DRIPPING, FORMING LITTLE PUDDLES ON THE MARBLE FLOORING. THE BUTLER DISSOLVED AMONG THE PEOPLE IN THE CROWDED BALLROOM. AND MOMENTARILY, A LOVELY YOUNG WOMAN DETATCHED HERSELF FROM THEM AND GLIDED GRACIOUSLY TOWARD HIM.
HOW DO YOU DO, SIR? SO NICE OF YOU TO COME!
EH? OH...YES! I'M SORRY TO INTRUDE BUT
IT'S QUITE ALL RIGHT! ALFRED, TAKE THE GENTLEMAN'S COAT!
OH, NO, PLEASE! I ONLY WANT TO GET DIRECTIONS! REALLY, IT'S NOT NECESSARY TO.
HE STOPPED TALKING. WASN'T THIS JUST WHAT HE HAD BEEN LOOKING FOR? SOMETHING EXCITING TO WILE AWAY THE EVENING? CERTAINLY! WHAT COULD BE BETTER THAN A PARTY... WITH WOMEN AND LIQUOR
ER... WELL, IF YOU INSIST! HERE, ALFRED... MY COAT!
THE GIRL LED HIM INTO THE GRAND BALLROOM AND HE WAS STUNNED BY ITS ELEGANCE. FLEETINGLY, HE GLIMPSED GLITTERING CANDELABRAS, EXQUISITE BROCADE DRAPERIES. THEY STOPPED BY THE PUNCH BOWL AND HE WATCHED HER DELICATELY FILL A GLASS...
WELL! HA, HA! ON A NIGHT LIKE THIS, A LITTLE NIP CERTAINLY LOOKS GOOD!
YES..

HE TOOK THE PROFFERED GLASS AND THANKED HER. AS HE SIPPED THE DRINK, HIS GAZE PASSED AMONG THE GUESTS. HE NOTED WITH DISPLEASURE THAT EVERYONE SEEMED TO BE HAVING A PERFECTLY *DULL* EVENING

WOW! BY THEIR EXPRESSIONS, YOU'D THINK THEY'D ALL BEEN EATING SOUR LEMONS! MAYBE I NISSED THE BOAT THIS TIME!

HE TURNED BACK TO THE GIRL, ONLY TO FIND SHE WASN'T THERE! HIS EYES FOUND HER ACROSS THE ROOM, SOLEMNLY STANDING BESIDE A YOUNG MAN...

HMMM—MY LADY FRIEND LOOKS BORED TO *DEATH!* MAYBE I'D BETTER GO OVER AND GIVE HER SOME OF THE OLD ADAMS CHARM! SHE'S A *REAL DOLL!*

CASUALLY, HE STRAIGHTENED HIS TIE AND MADE HIS WAY ACROSS THE ROOM...

I BEG YOUR PARDON.. MAY I HAVE THE HONOR OF DANCING WITH YOU?

WHY...OF COURSE... IF YOU WISH!

TO THE STRAINS OF A WALTZ, THEY GLIDED ROUND THE ROOM. JERRY ADAMS WAS AMAZED..

WHY...I'VE *NEVER* DANCED WITH SUCH A WONDERFUL PARTNER! YOU'RE SO...SO *LIGHT* AND *GRACEFUL!*

THANK YOU.

INDEED, HE COULD BARELY SENSE HER BACK BENEATH HIS FINGERS, SO SOFT AND PLIABLE DID SHE SEEM.

THIS HOUSE IS EXTREMELY BEAUTIFUL! IT MUST BE A GREAT PLEASURE TO LIVE IN IT!

YES. IT *IS* NICE.

HE WONDERED, AS THEY WHIRLED ROUND AND ROUND, IF SHE WAS ALWAYS SO QUIET. SHE WASN'T ANGRY... JUST... *DISINTERESTED,* HE THOUGHT. IT WOULD TAKE TIME...

THIS IS A *WONDERFUL* PARTY! WHAT—ER.. WHAT TIME DO YOU SUPPOSE IT WILL END?

THE SAME TIME IT *ALWAYS* ENDS... AT *MIDNIGHT!*

WHAT A BUNCH OF DEAD-BEATS! THESE HICKS CERTAINLY NEVER KNEW HOW TO ENJOY THEMSELVES, WHAT WITH THEIR STRICT MORALS AND PRIM WAYS OF LIVING. STILL...HE'D HEARD A *LOT* ABOUT COUNTRY GIRLS...

THEY CONTINUED CIRCLING, AND HE WONDERED IF IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER TO REMAIN AT THE HOTEL AND GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP. BUT THEN HIS MANLY INSTINCTS MADE HIM TRY AGAIN TO BREAK THROUGH THIS GIRL'S SERENITY— HER CALM, ALOOF DETACHMENT
YOU'LL HAVE TO FORGIVE MY NOT HAVING A COSTUME LIKE EVERYONE ELSE. I HOPE... YOU UNDERSTAND. I...
I UNDERSTAND.
IT'S JUST THAT I'M A STRANGER IN TOWN— JUST ARRIVED THIS EVENING! YOU SEE, I INHERITED SOME PROPERTY HEREABOUTS! I HAVE TO MEET SOME LAWYER IN THE MORNING TO...
HOW NICE
HE WAS STYMIED. WHAT WAS WRONG WITH THIS GIRL, ANYWAY? LITTLE BY LITTLE HE BECAME ANNOYED..
SAY, WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU? CAT GOT YOUR TONGUE?
NO.
OH...
ER... WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO *REST*? THIS DANCING CAN BE *TIRING*, HEH... CAN'T IT? SHALL WE *SIT* THIS ONE *OUT*?
IF YOU WISH!
THEY SAT. STIFFLY, UNCONCERNEDLY, SHE STARED AT THE MILLING DANCERS, SEEMINGLY UNAWARE OF THEIR PRESENCE. HE, FOR THE FIRST TIME, HAD A CHANCE TO STUDY THE GUESTS CLOSELY. THERE WAS THE RUMBLE OF MANY VOICES— YET HE COULD SPOT NO ONE ACTUALLY TALKING
AND THEN THE MUSIC SETTLED INTO HIS BRAIN— AND HE REALIZED THE ORCHESTRA HAD BEEN PLAYING THE *SAME WALTZ OVER AND OVER*, UNCEASINGLY, ALL EVENING!
I.. I, ER, HESITATE TO SAY THIS— BUT ISN'T THE MUSIC GETTING *MONOTONOUS*? I MEAN, THEY PLAY THE *SAME TUNE*...
YES THAT IS THE SONG THEY WERE PLAYING WHEN IT HAPPENED!
6

HE WAS BECOMING MORE THAN A LITTLE ANNOYED BY THIS GIRL'S BEHAVIOR! EVEN THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE PARTY ITSELF WAS MORE LIKE A FUNERAL THAN A GAY EVENT! HE LOOKED AT HIS WATCH... TEN MINUTES TO TWELVE!
YOU SAID THE ORCHESTRA IS PLAYING THE SAME SONG THEY PLAYED WHEN IT— WHEN IT HAPPENED! WHEN WHAT HAPPENED?
WHY... THE FIRE, OF COURSE!
WHAT FIRE?!
OH, PLEASE EXCUSE ME! MY FIANCE IS COMING! I FEAR I HAVE BEEN AWAY FROM HIM TOO LONG!
SIR— I SHOULD LIKE TO INTRODUCE MY FIANCE, MR. ROGER WERTHAM! ROGER, THIS IS— OH, I'M SORRY, SIR! I DO NOT KNOW YOUR NAME!
EH?
MY NAME? OH, HOW STUPID OF ME NOT TO MENTION IT! MY NAME IS ADAMS! JERRY ADAMS!

AT THE MENTION OF HIS NAME, EVERYTHING STOPPED! THE DANCING, THE MUSIC, THE TALKING... EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE BECAME MOTIONLESS! ATTENTION WAS RIVETED UPON HIM... AND THE SILENCE WAS *DEATHLY*.

DID YOU SAY YOUR NAME WAS *ADAMS*?

WHY... YES... YES! WHAT'S WRONG? WHAT'S THE MATTER? WHY ARE YOU ALL *STARING* AT ME LIKE THAT?

A GREAT RUSTLING AND MUMBLING ERUPTED FROM THE SURROUNDING PEOPLE. THE GIRL'S EYES GLEAMED

YOU HAVE REASON TO BE SURPRISED, MR. ADAMS! WE HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU... FOR *SUCH* A LONG TIME! WHY, IT'S BEEN MORE THAN *SEVENTY* YEARS!

WHA... WHAT ARE YOU *TALKING* ABOUT?

I'LL TRY TO EXPLAIN! THIS PARTY WAS MY *ENGAGEMENT PARTY*... BACK IN *1884*! I HAD TO CHOOSE BETWEEN *TWO* SUITORS... AND I CHOSE *ROGER*! BUT THE MAN WHOM I REFUSED... WAS VERY *JEALOUS*!

WHEN I ANNOUNCED MY CHOICE, MY OTHER SUITOR WAS *FURIOUS*! HE SET THIS HOUSE ON *FIRE*! EVERY-ONE YOU SEE HERE WAS *BURNED TO DEATH!*

EVERY YEAR SINCE THEN WE COME BACK TO *RE-ENACT* THE EVENTS OF THAT EVENING! FOR WE CANNOT GO TO A PEACEFUL REST UNTIL OUR DEATHS HAVE BEEN *AVENGED*!

THEY CAME AT HIM IN GLEEFUL AGITATION, THEIR FACES LEERING AT HIM FIENDISHLY, THEIR DECOMPOSED HANDS GRASPING TOWARD HIM. HE SAW THE ROPE... AND REALIZED THE CLIMAX AS THEY CROWDED UPON HIM...

YOU SEE... THE JEALOUS SUITOR WHO CAUSED OUR DEATHS WAS NAMED *ADAMS*... YOUR ANCESTOR, WHOSE PROPERTY YOU WERE TO INHERIT! AND IN HIS PLACE, WE MUST METE OUT *JUSTICE*... TO *YOU*!

THE END

HEH, HEH! IF ADAMS KNEW IT WAS GOING TO BE A *NECK-TIE PARTY*, HE WOULD'VE STOOD IN BED! BUT AS IT WAS, HIS *APPLE* GOT A GOOD BREAK. YOU KNOW... *ADAMS APPLE*! HEH! WELL, STAY TUNED TO THIS SAME CHANNEL... THE *CRYPT-KEEPER* IS NEXT IN VIEW! HEH, HEH!

THE CRYPT OF TERROR

"THE PEOPLE OF BERLIN HAD DESERTED THE PARK THAT RAW DECEMBER DAY. THE LEAFLESS, SLEEPING TREES .. THE FORSAKEN BIRD-NESTS.. THE HARD, FROZEN EARTH LAYING LIKE A DEAD WOMAN AWAITING A SNOWY SHROUD— ALL GAVE ANNA AND I THE PRIVACY FOR A RENDEZVOUS."

THIS IS *GOODBYE*, ANNA? THEN LET US HAVE A *FAREWELL KISS!*

I *MEAN* IT THIS TIME, EMIL! I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU AGAIN!

"I'D HAD THIS BUSINESS BEFORE WITH ANNA. SHE'D SAY WE WERE THROUGH.. BUT THE NEXT DAY SHE'D COME CRAWLING BACK TO ME! THIS TIME, HOWEVER, THERE WAS A COLDNESS, A *FINALITY* IN HER VOICE...THAT I FOUND HARD TO BELIEVE.."

ANNA, YOU *DON'T* MEAN IT! YOU'LL COME *BACK* TO ME...LIKE *ALWAYS!*

NO, EMIL! I'M GOING TO TELL MY HUSBAND *EVERYTHING!* I'M GOING TO BEG HIS FORGIVENESS! HE *LOVES* ME!

DON'T TALK LIKE A FOOL! YOU COULD *NEVER* GIVE ME UP! YOU...*OW!*

IT'S OVER! CAN'T YOU UNDERSTAND? WE'RE *THROUGH!*

"I DON'T KNOW WHY OR HOW I SUDDENLY BECAME SO ENRAGED! BEFORE I REALIZED WHAT I WAS DOING, I GRABBED THE SCARF-ENDS AND DREW THEM TIGHTLY ABOUT HER THROAT..."

ALL RIGHT, ANNA.. THEN IT'S *OVER!*

"A MOMENT LATER SHE SLUMPED TO THE GROUND— AND STILL I TWISTED THE SCARF TIGHTER EVEN THOUGH I HEARD THE HEAVY POUNDING OF FEET BEHIND ME.."

"HUGE, POWERFUL HANDS YANKED ME AWAY FROM THE LIMP BODY AND SPUN ME AROUND! A GREAT FIST SLAMMED AGAINST MY HEAD WITH THE FORCE OF A SLEDGE-HAMMER!"

WHAT HAVE YOU *DONE* TO HER? WHAT HAVE YOU *DONE* TO MY *WIFE!?*

"DIMLY, I SAW THE MAN CRADLE ANNA IN HIS ENORMOUS ARMS, VAGUELY, I REALIZED THAT HE WAS *HEINRICH*.. ANNA'S *HUSBAND!* THROUGH THE THROBBING ACHE IN MY HEAD, I HEARD HER MOURNFUL SOBS— AND SLOWLY, PAINFULLY, I TRIED TO CRAWL AWAY.."

ANNA— (SOB) MY ANNA! WHERE HAVE I *FAILED* YOU?

"I HAD HARDLY GONE FIFTEEN FEET WHEN THE GREAT BRUTE WAS UPON ME, PULLING ME UP AS IF I WERE A RAG-DOLL! I COULD SEE THE HATE DEEP IN HIS TEAR-REDDENED EYES...THE LIVID SCAR ON HIS CHIN..."
I COULD KILL YOU, MISTER! I COULD SNAP YOUR FILTHY NECK WITH ONE HAND...BUT THERE WILL BE A WORSE WAY... I PROMISE YOU!
YOU...YOU SHOULD THANK ME! SHE... SHE WAS NO GOOD!
"HEINRICH SLAMMED HIS CALLOUSED PAW AGAINST MY MOUTH! MY LIPS BECAME NUMB AND SWOLLEN ALMOST AT ONCE, AND I COULD FEEL WARM BLOOD FROM WHERE THEY WERE TORN, TRICKLING DOWN MY CHIN..."
LIAR! MY ANNA IS DEAD! I HAVE NOTHING TO LIVE FOR NOW...NOTHING BUT TO SEE YOU SUFFER AND DIE!
"I CAN HARDLY RECALL THE FRIGHTFUL FANTASY OF MY TRIAL. HEINRICH WAS THERE, STARING AT ME! I TRIED NOT TO LOOK AT HIM, BUT I FELT HIS SMOULDERING EYES ON ME EVERY AGONIZING MOMENT
"I WAS FILLED WITH RELIEF WHEN I AT LAST RECEIVED MY SENTENCE..."
...AND ON A DAY CONVENIENT TO THE HEAD WARDEN, YOU, EMIL VOIGT, WILL BE PUT TO DEATH...
"IN MY CELL I THOUGHT OF MY DEATH AND IT SEEMED UNREAL...IT COULD NEVER HAPPEN TO ME! THEN, ONE DAY..."
EMIL VOIGT! YOU HAVE A VISITOR!
"I RECOGNIZED HIM AT ONCE BY THE BIG SCAR ON HIS CHIN, AND THOSE HATE-FILLED EYES THAT GLARED THROUGH THE SLOTS IN HIS EXECUTIONER'S MASK..."
HEINRICH! YOU...YOU ARE THE EXECUTIONER!
ANNA DIDN'T TELL YOU ABOUT MY JOB, EH? BUT DON'T TREMBLE SO! YOUR TIME HAS NOT COME...YET!
I HAVE TO EXECUTE A MAN IN A LITTLE WHILE, SO I CAN ONLY SPARE A FEW MINUTES! HAVE YOU EVER SEEN AN EXECUTION, VOIGT? LET ME TELL YOU HOW IT GOES!
NO...NO, I DON'T WANT TO HEAR! GO AWAY!

"MENTALLY, I TRIED TO DEAFEN MYSELF, BUT HIS WORDS BURNED INTO MY BRAIN. I FOUGHT NOT TO LOOK, YET I COULD NOT TEAR MY EYES FROM THE GLEAMING, RAZORED AXE..."
I SPEND THE NIGHT BEFORE HONING MY AXE SO IT WILL BE OVER QUICKLY FOR THE DOOMED MAN.. UNLESS IT HAPPENS TO BE SOMEONE I DON'T LIKE! THEN I AM HAPPY TO WASTE THREE OR FOUR STROKES TO PROLONG THE AGONY!
"I COVERED MY EARS... AND STILL I HEARD..."
...FIRST I GO TO MY VICTIM'S CELL, AND IN MY MOST SOMBRE VOICE, I CALL HIM! SOMETIMES HE WILL WALK WITH ME...OTHER TIMES HE WILL BE DRAGGED, CLAWING AND SCREAMING!
... AND AS YOUR HEAD TUMBLES INTO THE WAITING BASKET, BEFORE THE DARKNESS CLOSES IN, YOU'LL SEE YOUR NECK... GHASTLY RAW FLESH, SPLINTERED BONE, THE RED BLOOD GUSHING OUT...!
STOP IT! STOP IT!
IT IS SOMETHING FOR YOU TO THINK ABOUT, VOIGT! WHEN YOUR TIME COMES, YOU'LL KNOW I'LL ONLY BE THINKING OF ANNA, AND HOW LONELY I AM, AND HOW GOOD IT WILL BE TO JOIN HER... AFTER I HAVE FINISHED WITH YOU!
"I FELL UPON MY BUNK IN A COMA-LIKE SLEEP, EXHAUSTED BY THE HORRENDOUS EXPERIENCE TO WHICH HEINRICH HAD SUBJECTED ME..."
"I DID NOT KNOW HOW LONG I SLEPT, BUT SUDDENLY, THROUGH THE MIST OF MY UNCONSCIOUS, I HEARD HIS VOICE CALLING ME. HE CALLED AGAIN, LOUDER.."
COME, EMIL VOIGT!
IS IS IT (GASP) NOW?
"MY INSIDES QUIVERED LIKE COLD JELLY, AND MY LEGS WERE RUBBERY BENEATH ME, BUT I WAS FIERCELY DETERMINED NOT TO SHOW HIM MY FEAR. NOT TILL I LAID EYES ON THE BLOODSTAINED BLOCK... NOT TILL THEN DID I WEAKEN..."
NO! NO! PLEASE!
TO THE BLOCK, EMIL VOIGT!

"HEINRICH BRUSQUELY SHOVED ME DOWN ON MY KNEES AND ADJUSTED MY HEAD ON THE BLOCK! I GLANCED UP AND SAW THE MIGHTY SWELLING OF HIS BICEPS AS HE RAISED THE AXE! IT GLINTED IN THE SUNLIGHT..."

"IT WAS DULL, THAT BLADE, AND THE BLOW BADLY AIMED! I COULD HEAR HIM LAUGH, THROUGH MY AGONY, AS HE BROUGHT THE AXE DOWN *AGAIN AND AGAIN*... AND I WOKE UP FROM THE SOUND OF MY OWN SCREAMS!"

OOOHH.. I'VE ..I'VE BEEN *DREAMING!*

"I WAS FRIGHTENED. THE NIGHTMARE HAD CLEARLY FORTOLD THE AGONIES I WOULD ENDURE AT HEINRICH'S HANDS, AND I WAS POSSESSED WITH DREAD..."

"HAD I KNOWN I WOULD *DREAM* AGAIN, I WOULD NEVER HAVE *SLEPT* THAT NIGHT..."

COME, EMIL VOIGT!

"HE SEIZED MY CHAINS AND DRAGGED ME, STRUGGLING AND SCREAMING, THROUGH THE CORRIDOR OF THE DAMNED...

"I RANTED AND KICKED EVERY STEP OF THE WAY! TWO ASSISTANTS WERE NEEDED TO HOLD MY HEAD DOWN TO THE CHOPPING BLOCK..EVEN *AFTER* THE FIRST BLOW OF THE DULL BLADE..."

"AGAIN I AWOKE SCREAMING! SWEAT BEADED MY SKIN... AND THE BACK OF MY NECK ACHED! TREMBLING, I TRIED TO LIGHT A CIGARETTE..."

A DREAM! A BLASTED *DREAM!* IT'S DRIVING ME *CRAZY!* WHY DON'T THEY GET IT OVER WITH?!

"THE DAYS AND NIGHTS PASSED ENDLESSLY IN A WHIRL OF HORRIFYING NIGHTMARES AND THOUGH I FOUGHT TO STAY AWAKE, MY WAKING THOUGHTS OFFERED NO RELIEF..."
"I LIVED IN AN HYSTERICAL DELIRIUM, HARDLY KNOWING WHEN I WAS CONSCIOUS, BEING AWARE ONLY OF HOW I WAS LED TO THE BLOCK TIME AND AGAIN I WAS TOO NUMB TO FEEL FEAR. I COULD ONLY FEEL THE TERRIBLE BLOWS, THE CRUSHING OF BONES, THE CHOCK OF THE AXE IN MY FLESH..."
"INSIDE I ACHED FROM THE TORMENTS OF MY REPEATED DREAMS. I LONGED FOR DEATH... SWEET UNKNOWINS, UNFEELING DEATH..."
"I PRAYED FOR DEATH! I WELCOMED IT WITH OPEN ARMS FOR I KNEW IT WAS THE ONLY MEANS OF MY ESCAPING THIS TORTURE..."
"AND THEN AT LAST, IT WAS TIME..."
COME, EMIL VOIGT.
AT LAST! IT WILL BE OVER SOON!
"I WALKED TO DEATH WITH A SMILE. I WAS HAPPY KNOWING THIS WAS THE REAL THING! HEINRICH SAW MY JOY, AND HE SCOWLED AT ME IN SPEECHLESS FURY"
YOU LOSE, HEINRICH! YOU CAN'T HURT ME ANYMORE! IN A FEW MOMENTS, I'LL BE FREE OF YOU!
"IT WAS SOMETHING I HAD NOT COUNTED ON OR HOPED FOR... HEINRICH LOST HIS TEMPER! HE BROUGHT THE GREAT AXE DOWN WITH ALL HIS MIGHT! ONE QUICK, SHARP PAIN.. AND IT WAS OVER!"
THOK
6

"DO YOU THINK ONE DOES NOT KNOW WHEN HE HAS CROSSED THE BARRIER? I KNEW. I KNEW HEINRICH LIFTED MY HEAD FROM THE BASKET, AND THAT HE WAS INFURIATED BECAUSE HE COULD HURT ME NO MORE."

IT WAS TOO EASY, VOIGT!
TOO EASY, DO YOU HEAR?

"I KNEW WHEN THEY SEWED MY HEAD BACK ONTO MY BODY, AND WHEN THEY CARTED ME OFF IN AN OLD WAGON, WHEN THEY BURIED ME IN AN UNMARKED GRAVE, I KNEW WHEN HEINRICH EMPTIED THE POISON DOWN HIS BULL-LIKE THROAT."

I'M COMING, ANNA! I'M COMING!

"...AND THEN I HEARD THE VOICE, THE SAME VOICE, THE TERRIBLE, HAUNTING VOICE I HAD HEARD SO OFTEN..."

COME, EMIL VOIGT!

"IT WAS A CALL I COULD NOT RESIST. I ROSE TO ANSWER IT...AND FACED HIM...*HEINRICH, MY EXECUTIONER...*"

COME, EMIL VOIGT! *NO!* (GASP!) *NO! NO!*

"...AND I REALIZED NOW THAT I WAS TO SPEND AN ETERNITY PAYING, *OVER AND OVER AGAIN WITHOUT END*, FOR ANNA'S MURDER..."

THE END

HEH, HEH! A WEE BIT ON THE *GORY* SIDE, EH, KIDDIES? YOU'VE GOT TO ADMIT THAT EMIL HAD A *HEAD* FOR BUSINESS...HEH... *MONKEY BUSINESS!* WELL, IF YOU'RE STILL IN THE *MOOD* FOR *MORBIDITY*, STICK AROUND... *V, K'S* READY WITH MORE, SO *TOODLE-BOO* FOR NOW!

As far back as he could remember, Milton Canasta had hated his miserly old Aunt. For, while the impoverished nephew scrabbled for pennies to feed himself, ancient Aunt Bridget was busily squandering the once-fabled Canasta fortune. Her collection of antique jewelry, for instance, had cost enough to keep Milton in cakes and ale for the rest of his life!

The idea that the collection was still growing infuriated Milton: before long every last dollar would be gone, converted into baubles long since turned green with age... into bracelets which were ancient before the time of the Crusades. A half-million dollars hurled away for this junk, and Aunt Bridget couldn't even *see* the hideous junk! What good was the most bizzare curio collection this side of the moon, Milton Canasta thought bitterly, to a woman who was BLIND?

He heard footsteps outside, on the graveled walk, and moved toward the window. Down on the terrace the old witch was strolling, guiding herself by touching gnarled shrubs and decaying tree trunks whose precise location she had long ago memorized. And as he watched with hate-filled eyes, a thought came to Milton Canasta's mind. He was alone here in the treasure room: why shouldn't he cram his pockets with golden amulets and fabulous necklaces? He could walk past Aunt Bridget, then, without the slightest risk of detection!

Feverishly, Milton grabbed up fistfuls of the priceless stuff and dropped it into the pockets of his tattered coat. With a snicker, he started out of the room; before he reached the doorway a plan for final triumph over hateful Aunt Bridget struck him. His hand plunged into his pocket and withdrew an ancient ring ... one on which was the carved image of a curled snake. With a whinny of delight he slipped the ring over the third finger of his right hand. It was no sooner in place than he heard the thrum of heels. Aunt Bridget clicked into the room, her withered hands using the walls as guide-lines. Under her very eyes Milton would walk off with her collection!

"Got to run along now, Aunty," Milton said. His Aunt's right hand shot out, fingers extended. Milton stared, then recalled that this contemptible relative prided herself on the firmness of her handclasp. Milton's own hand slowly swung forward: their fingers locked in a steely grip. For a moment Milton thought he experienced a pinprick of pain in one of his fingers, but he shrugged off the notion. He quickly stepped past Bridget Canasta and moved toward the door.

He never made it. For the agony in his hand increased to the point wherein his eyes turned watery and he found it almost impossible to breathe. He staggered, turning unbelieving eyes down upon his hand. The finger which wore the snake ring was already puffy and violent-red. Milton gasped and began to sag toward the floor; the pain in his finger had now spread to his shoulder and, along veins and arteries screaming in frightful anguish, to the rest of his writhing body. *The ring*, he thought in panic, *it must've been loaded with POISON! I've read about horrors like this ... a needle jammed into the flesh of the ring-wearer, and the pressure of a firm handshake releases deadly...*

But Milton Canasta was unable to continue with his intriguing theory. For by now his body had ceased to thrash spasmodically, inasmuch as it was growing cold and rigid. And his eyeballs were staring straight ahead, wide and incredibly criss-crossed with ruptured blood vessels. Sightless, of course.

DO PEOPLE LAUGH AT YOU FOR READING COMIC BOOKS?

DO YOU HEAR PEOPLE FAINTLY SNICKERING BEHIND YOUR BACK AS YOU RIDE THE TRAIN TO SCHOOL OR WORK? EXAMINE THE SITUATION! HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN YOUR PANTS? IS THE COMIC BOOK YOU ARE READING ONE OF THE KIND WITH THE LOUD, GARISH COVERS? NO WONDER PEOPLE LAUGH! DO YOU WANT TO LOOK LIKE AN IDIOT READING COMIC BOOKS ALL YOUR LIFE?... IF YOU DON'T, THEN LISTEN TO THIS! ***MAD*** COMIC BOOK HAS A NEW COVER DESIGN THAT MAKES IT LOOK LIKE HIGH-CLASS LITERATURE! BUY THE LATEST ISSUE OF ***MAD***, THEN YOU CAN LOOK LIKE AN IDIOT READING HIGH-CLASS LITERATURE!..BUY ***MAD*** AT YOUR NEWSSTAND... OR SUBSCRIBE!

SUBSCRIPTION COUPON

MAD EDITORS
ROOM 706
225 LAFAYETTE ST.
N.Y.C. 12, N.Y.

PLEASE SEND ME THE NEXT 8 ISSUES OF ***MAD*** FOR WHICH I ENCLOSE ONE DOLLAR ($1.00)

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THE VAULT-KEEPER'S CORNER

Heh, heh! I'm gonna start this column with some high-class PERVERTED POETRY. How about this one, submitted by John Wychoff of Palo Alto, Calif.:

Mary was a little ghoul
Her father killed her dead!
Now Mary's on the dinner table
Between two hunks of bread!

And then there's the contribution of G.R.D. of Alta Vista, Kansas:

I tried to kill my mother-in-law..
Bashed in her head with a club,
Sawed her in half with a razor-sharp sword,
And boiled her remains in a tub
I beat her with my blackjack,
I stabbed her with my knife,
I threw her head-first downstairs
But she jumped back full of life!

So I bought me a weird comic book,
T'was called "The Vault of Horror,"
I took it home to her last night
And placed it down before 'er.
She took one look... her eyes bulged out
Her face turned pasty-white..
"The Vault of Horror" did the trick,
She died all right... from fright!

Now some PULSATING POGRAMS beamed in by Larry Hauch of Alton, Ill., and Aldo Betro of Brooklyn, N.Y.:

DEATH OF RILEY
MARTIN VEIN, PRIVATE BLOOD-VESSEL
STRIKE IT DEAD
BREAK THE BLOOD-BANK
STOP THE BREATHING
I LOVE LYMPH
COCAINE, FRAN, AND AGONY

Bob Burg of Long Island, N.Y. keeps MORBID MOVIES going with:

KILL ME KATE
SNOW WHITE AND
THE SEVERED DWARFS
LOUSE OF WAX
HOW TO BURY A MILLIONAIRE
GENTLEMEN BEHEAD BLONDES

In the LURID LYRICS division, to the tune of "My Bonnie," Pete Oliphant, Pres. of E.C. Fan-Addict Club Chapter 46, Washington, D.C., suggests:

My Bonnie looked into a gas tank
To see what its contents might be
By dropping a match thereinto...
Oh bring back my Bonnie to me!

E. Nelson Bridwell of Oklahoma City was so inspired by Mike Reynolds' parody on "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" that he sent one in too:

Stake me out on the ant-hill
Stake me out in the sun,
Smear me with honey and leave me there —
'Twon't be long till my bones are stripped bare,
For they chomp, chomp, chomp, little ants do
Until they've eaten their fill..
And there's *one, two, three million ants*
In the old ant hill!

Enough of that drivel... let's have a couple letters:

Dear V.K.,

I'm a high-school senior, and I was prompted to write when I noticed how few girls' names appeared in your letter columns. I just want to tell you that at least ONE girl thinks your mag is tops. (And then too, you're such a handsome devil... you just make my flesh crawl.) If my letter is printed, please use only my initials!

L.P.
Farmersville, Calif.

But of course dear! Think I'd print your WHOLE name, and risk the CRYPT-KEEPER beating my time? If I can sneak away from Drusilla (see page 1!), I'll be right out to sunny California so we can... chat?

...Please congratulate Johnny Craig and Ghastly Ingels for E.C.'s most heart-warming story "Shoe Button Eyes"... in issue 35.

Richie Bockle!
Ridgewood, N.Y.

No. They'll want money!

And speaking of money... how about some commercials? They're still pushing the 3-D mags! They got so many 3-D mags cluttering up the E.C. offices, it shouldn't happen to a rival publisher! And that's the trouble! It didn't! It happened to them! Anyway... if you have not yet read THREE DIMENSIONAL TALES FROM THE CRYPT OF TERROR or THREE DIMENSIONAL E.C. CLASSICS why bother! But if you insist on bothering, SPECIAL PRICE 15c each... two for 30c! And, while ordering, stick in an extra buck for a subscription to MY mag... eight issues... manila envelopes! The address for all this stuff is:

The Vault-Keeper
Room 706, Dept. 37
225 Lafayette Street
N.Y.C. 12, N.Y.

HERE IS A TALE ABOUT A CARETAKER, AND ODDLY ENOUGH, IT'S CALLED...

TAKE CARE

JEFFERSON BATES, LEGAL TRUSTEE OF THE HUGE MANSION, SNORTED AT THE THICK LAYER OF DUST, THE NUMEROUS SPIDER WEBS, LISTENED IN DISGUST TO THE SCUTTLING RATS BETWEEN THE WALLS, AND CONTINUED DOWN THE GLOOMY HALLWAY...

COME, COME, MR DENCH! THIS WAY!

YES, SIR!

ALBRECHT DENCH, THE NEWLY-HIRED CARETAKER, SHUFFLED SLOWLY BEHIND MR BATES, HIS EYES WARILY SCANNING THE DREARY SURROUNDINGS

TCH! LOOKS TO ME LIKE THERE AIN'T BEEN ARY WORK DONE ON THIS HOUSE IN FIFTY YEARS!

AND YOU'RE RIGHT! BUT ACTUALLY THE PLACE HAS ONLY BEEN UNOCCUPIED FOR A FEW MONTHS!

PARDON MY SAYING SO, MR. BATES, SIR... BUT THIS HOUSE LIKE TO GIVE A BODY THE SHAKES!

I AGREE.. IT *IS* A STRANGE PLACE! HEAVEN ONLY KNOWS HOW *OLD* IT IS, AND I'M TOLD IT'S HONEYCOMBED WITH SECRET PANELS AND PASSAGES! AND FOR SOME REASON IT WAS BUILT WITH A *BELL TOWER!*

MUST HAVE BEEN REAL STRANGE PEOPLE LIVIN' HERE!

YES! THE LAST OWNER, AVERY BALLUSK, *WAS* A WEIRD SORT! WEALTHY BUT MISERLY AND A RECLUSE AS WELL!

"HE WAS RARELY EVER SEEN BY THE TOWNSPEOPLE. BUT HE WAS AN UGLY, CRIPPLED RECLUSE, WHO HAD A COMPANION TO WAIT ON HIM."

"THE COMPANION WAS NAMED DREGG! RUDOLPH DREGG! HE DID ALL THE BUYING OF SUPPLIES, AND NURSED AVERY FOR MANY YEARS!"

RUDOLPH, YOU IDIOT! BLOW OUT ALL THOSE CANDLES! YOU'RE *WASTING* THEM!

ALL RIGHT, AVERY!

"THE REST OF THE STORY IS ONLY SUPPOSITION, BUT IT SEEMS THAT RUDOLPH WAS QUITE ENVIOUS OF AVERY AND WAS ONLY WAITING FOR HIM TO DIE, FOR HE EXPECTED TO INHERIT ALL OF AVERY'S WEALTH."

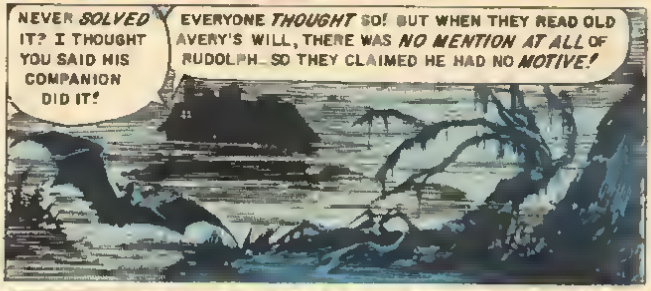
I'VE TOLD YOU OFTEN ENOUGH THAT BURNING SO MANY CANDLES IS JUST A *WASTE!* WHY CAN'T YOU REMEMBER?

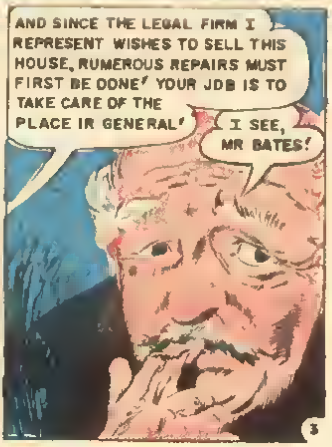
ALL *RIGHT*, AVERY!

"AS I SAY, THIS IS ONLY SUPPOSITION! NO ONE KNOWS WHAT *REALLY* HAPPENED, BUT THEY SAY THAT ONE NIGHT, RUDOLPH LOST HIS PATIENCE..."

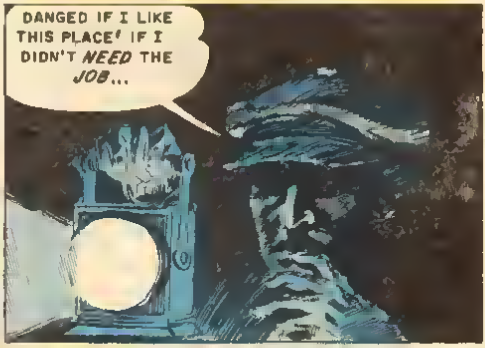
EH? THAT YOU, RUDOLPH? *RUDOLPH, IS THAT YOU?* CONFOUND IT, *LIGHT A CANDLE, WILL YOU!*

"THE TOWNSPEOPLE HEARD THE STEEPLE-BELL RINBING ALL RIGHT LORG, AND THE FOLLOWING DAY THEY INVESTIGATED. THEY FOUND AVERY HANGED..SWAYIRG TO ARD FRO ON THE BELL ROPE..."



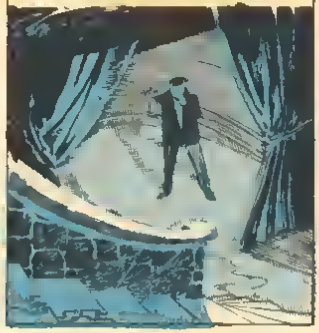


MR DENCH LISTENED TO THE STEPS GRADUALLY FADING DOWN THE CORRIDORS TO THE FRONT OF THE OLD HOUSE. HE HEARD THE FRONT DOOR SLAM SHUT, AND SUDDENLY HE FELT VERY MUCH TOO MUCH ALONE!



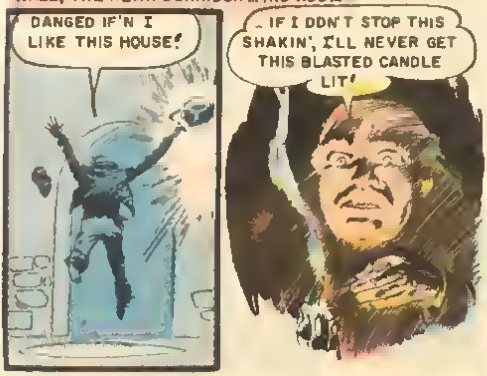
FOR THE NEXT FEW HOURS, MR DENCH PROWLED THE HUGE HOUSE, FAMILIARIZING HIMSELF WITH IT, JUMPING AT THE SOUND OF EVERY SCUTTLING RAT.

EXPLORING NERVOUSLY THE DANK, MUSTY CELLAR, THE MANY BLACK, GLOOMY STAIRWELLS BRUSHING ASIDE THE COBWEBS THAT SEEMED TO COVER ALL.



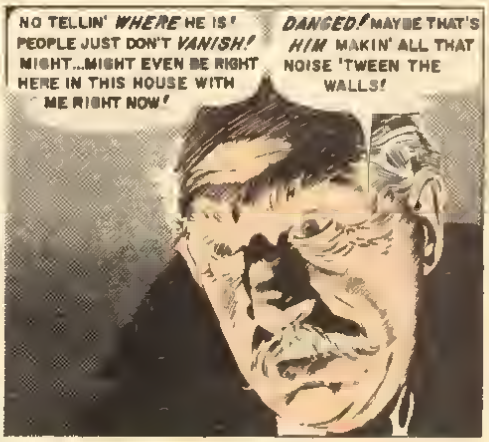
UNTIL WITH A *PANIC* HE FELT HE WAS LOST IN THE MAZE OF ROOMS AND CORRIDORS UNTIL HE FELT THE OUTSIDE WORLD NEVER WAS

.. AND IN SPITE OF HIMSELF HE RAN BLINDLY IN THE ECHOING HALLS, DOWN CLATTERING STAIRS TO THE MAIN HALL, THE REAR CORRIDOR ... HIS ROOM.

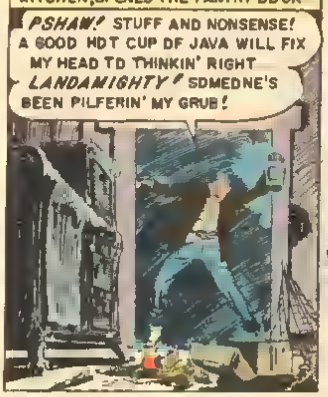


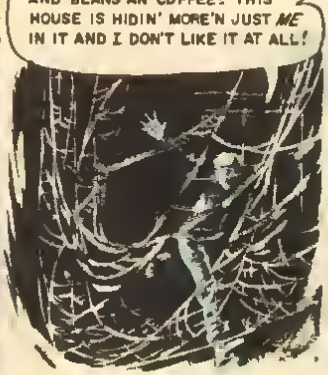
HE HUDDLED CLOSE TO THE CANDLE, GRATEFUL FOR ITS MEAGER LIGHT, AND STUDIED HIS SURROUNDINGS. HE COULDN'T TAKE HIS EYES FROM THE BELL-ROPE THAT RAN UP THROUGH A GAPING HOLE IN THE CEILING.

IN COMPLIANCE WITH HIS ORDERS, MR. BENCH FORCED HIMSELF TO MAKE A TOUR OF THE OLD MANSION BEFORE GOING TO BED. HE ROAMED THROUGH THE HALLS, HIS HEART FLUTTERING BECAUSE OF HIS GROWING FEAR...



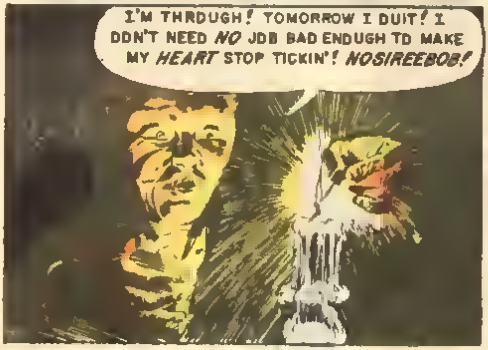
HE MOVED QUIETLY TO THE UNUSED KITCHEN, OPENED THE PANTRY DOOR





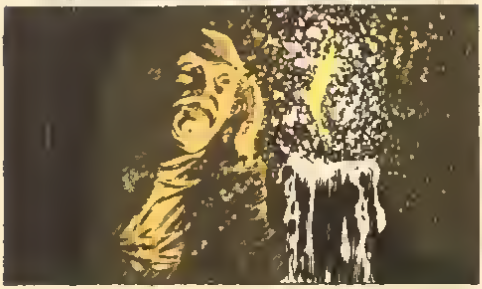
HE REACHED THE END OF THE HALL, TURNED THE CORNER, AND AS HE PASSED THE STAIRS, HE GLANCED UP!

TERRIFIED, HE RAN BACK TO HIS ROOM, SLAMMED THE DOOR BEHIND HIM AND LOCKED IT! GASPING FOR AIR, HE STAGGERED TO HIS BED, FUMBLINGLY LIGHTED THE CANDLE...



HE SAT CLOSE TO THE GLOWING CANDLE, LISTENING TO THE CLUMPINGS AND SCURRYINGS . AND AS HE SAT, HE REALIZED WITH A SHOCK THAT THE SOUNDS HAD CHANGED...

HE LISTENED INTENTLY, HOPING THAT HIS EARS WERE DECEIVING HIM, PRAYING THAT THE PAIN IN HIS CHEST WOULD CEASE! THE SHUFFLING STEPS CREPT CLOSER, TILL HE HEARD THEM STOP. JUST OUTSIDE HIS DOOR!



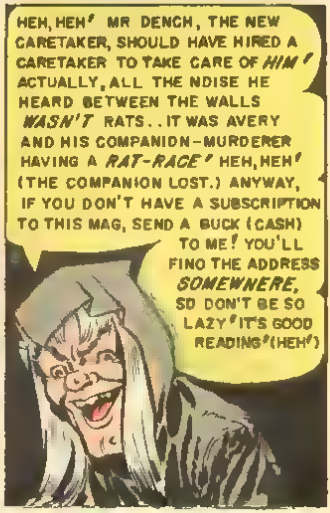
HE WAITED, STARING BREATHLESSLY AT THE DOOR! AND THEN HE HEARD THE UNMISTAKABLE SOUND OF A KEY IN THE LOCK, THE SQUEAKING TURNING OF THE KNOB... AND THE DOOR CREAKED SLOWLY OPEN! INSTANTLY, A SEVERE DRAFT RUSHED THROUGH THE ROOM

BLACKNESS ENGULFED HIM! HE TRIED TO FIND MATCHES BUT ONLY KNOCKED OVER THE CANDLE! HE STOPPED... THE FOOTSTEPS WERE MOVING TOWARD HIM

HE FELT A COLD CLAMMINESS NEAR HIM! THE STEPS WERE DIRECTLY BESIDE HIM, MOVING CLOSER, AND AS HIS IMMENSE TERROR CONSTRICTED HIS HEART, HE SCREAMED!

A SEARING, AGONIZING PAIN SHOT THROUGH HIS CHEST! HE CLUTCHED AT HIS HEART, GASPING, TREMBLING! HIS HEAD SWAM, AND DIMLY, THROUGH THE WHIRLPOOL, HE SENSED THE FOOTSTEPS CONTINUING AWAY...

THE MONOTONOUS TOLLING OF THE BELL AROUSED THE TOWNSPEOPLE THE FOLLOWING MORNING. GREATLY EXCITED, HIGHLY CURIOUS, THEY BANDED TOGETHER TO INVESTIGATE. THEY FOUND THE NEW CARETAKER LYING ON HIS BED, DEAD OF A HEART ATTACK. IN THE ROOM'S CORNER THE MISSING COMPANION WAS HANGING LIMPLY FROM THE BELL-ROPE! AND BENEATH HIM, SPRAWLED GROTESQUELY ON THE FLOOR, WAS THE ROTTED, STINKING CORPSE OF THE FORMER OWNER, AVERY.



THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

YOU SIT THERE, DETECTIVE LIEUTENANT LIONEL HART, YOUR FACE TWISTED, YOUR MIND SEETHING...STARING AT THE TEN DOLLAR BILL IN YOUR HAND! YOU STARE AT YOUR NOW USELESS MONEY AND YOU THINK BACK TO WHEN IT ALL STARTED

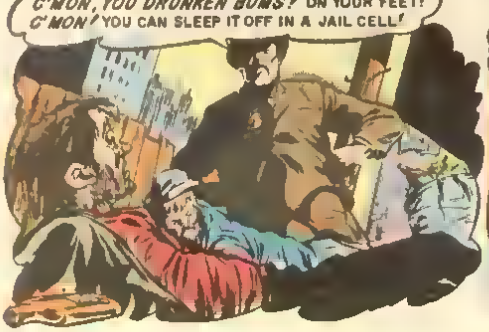
IT WAS JUST ONE MONTH AGO, LIONEL HART, THAT YOU PROWLED YOUR BEAT AS A PLAINCLOTHESMAN, COVERING THE MIDTOWN SECTION. IT HAD BEEN A GOOD DAY...YOU CAUGHT A PICK-POCKET RED-HANDED!

YOU NEVER *DID* TAKE ANY BUFF FROM THOSE GRIFTERS, HART! THAT'S WHY YOUR FELLOW OFFICERS CALLED YOU *'HARD HART'!* YOU TAUGHT THEM RESPECT FOR THE LAW

FILTHY BEGGARS! *THAT'S* WHAT THEY *DESERVED!* YOU HAD TO *PROTECT* SOCIETY! YOU HAD TO UPHOLD THE LAW! IT WAS YOUR *DUTY!*

IT GAVE YOU A SENSE OF POWER TO BE AN OFFICER OF THE LAW, DION'T IT, HART? YOU SWAGGERED DOWN THE STREET *LOOKING* FOR TROUBLE..

...AND IF THINGS GOT SLOW, THERE WAS ALWAYS THE RAGGED MOOCHERS, THE MISERABLE, DOWNTRODDEN WRETCHES YOU ARRESTED FOR VAGRANCY IN YOUR ZEAL TO CARRY OUT THE LAW TO ITS FINAL LETTER



YES, IT HAD BEEN A MOST SATISFYING DAY! BUT THE *BEST* WAS YET TO COME...FOR AS YOU PASSED THE LITTLE GROCERY STORE, YOU HAPPENED TO GLANCE IN... AND YOU SAW THE LITTLE OLD LADY NERVOUSLY STUFFING A LOAF OF BREAD INTO HER SHOPPING BAG

YOU WATCHED HER CLOSELY, HART! YOU SAW THE STOREKEEPER TURN TO WAIT ON A CUSTOMER, SAW THE LITTLE LADY HURRY FROM THE PLACE...
NOT SO FAST, LADY! YOU'RE UNDER ARREST!
EH? OH... PLEASE! I...I WAS GOING TO PAY!
YOU HAD HER SIZED UP, ALL RIGHT! JUST A SNEAKY DAME WHO MADE A PRACTICE OF LEECHING! YOU CALLED HER BLUFF, DIDN'T YOU, HART?
OKAY! THEN PAY THE MAN!
ER WELL... IT. IT SEEMS DEAR ME! OH, DEAR ME!
PLEASE, OFFICER! I ..I KNOW IT LOOKS BAD! BUT I'M NOT A THIEF! THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I EVER TOOK ANY THING! HONESTLY! I WAS DESPERATE! MY HUSBAND IS SICK! HE'S HOME NOW. WAITING FOR ME!
IT MADE YOU FEEL GOOD TO KNOW SHE WAS CAUGHT! YOU REMEMBER HOW SHE GABBLED ON! YOU EVEN ADMIRED HER ACTING, WITH HER SWEET OLD FACE SO TROUBLED, HER GENTLE VOICE SO PAINED...
MY POOR HENRY! HE'S AN INVALID IN A WHEELCHAIR! I SUPPORTED HIM BY SEWING... UNTIL I GOT ARTHRITIS SO BAD IN MY FINGERS! WE HAVE NO... NO MONEY! I...I...
YOU HAD TO ADMIT IT WAS A DILLY OF A STORY, HART...AND YOU'D LISTENED TO SOME OF THE BEST!
YOU UNDERSTAND, DON'T YOU, OFFICER? MY HENRY, HE'S HELPLESS! I HAVE TO FEED HIM! HE NEEDS FOOD OR HE'LL DIE! HE'LL STARVE TO DEATH! I, I HAD TO BRING HIM... SOMETHING!
THE STORIES THEY MADE UP OUT OF THIN AIR TO COVER THEIR ROTTEN CRIMES MADE YOU BOIL! YOU SNARLED TO SHUT HER UP, BUT WHO SHOULD STEP IN BUT THE ROBBED STOREKEEPER HIMSELF!
WAIT! DON'T ARREST HER! IF SHE NEEDS THE FOOD THAT BADLY, WHY...
WHAT?! DON'T TELL ME YOU FELL FOR THAT SOB STORY! SHE'S JUST TRYING TO WORM HER WAY FREE!
LOOK... IT'S ONLY A DOLLAR'S WORTH OF STUFF! I WON'T PRESS CHARGES!
WELL I WILL! I SAW HER STEAL IT! I CAUGHT HER! NO CROOK IS GOING TO MAKE A FOOL OF ME!

OFFICER, PLEASE! PERHAPS IT WAS WRONG OF ME TO DO WHAT I DID, BUT I HAD NO OTHER WAY! PLEASE! I MUST HAVE FOOD FOR HENRY! TRY TO UNDERSTAND! I'M TELLING YOU THE TRUTH!
NOTHING DOING! YOU BROKE THE LAW!
COULDN'T YOU LEND ME THE DOLLAR TO PAY FOR THIS FOOD? I BEG OF YOU! I'LL DO ANYTHING YOU ASK. ANYTHING! IT'S ONLY A DOLLAR! PLEASE! (SOB!)
COME OH, SISTER! TELL IT TO THE JUDGE!
YOU REMEMBER HOW SHE SOBBED ALL THE WAY TO THE STATIONHOUSE. HOW THE SERGEANT DREW YOU ASIDE.
LOOK, LIEUTENANT! SHE'S A SWEET OLD DAME! COULDN'T WE JUST.
HO! I SAID BOOK HER FOR SHOP-LIFTING!
THE SERGEANT HAD BOOKED HER...
I'LL SEE THAT THE JUDGE SLAPS YOU WITH SIXTY DAYS FOR ALL THE TROUBLE YOU'VE GIVEN ME!
SIXTY DAYS? OH NO—NO! MY POOR HENRY! HE'LL STARVE!
DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? HENRY'S ALL ALONE! HE'S PARALYZED! HE'S COMPLETELY HELPLESS! HE (SOB) HE CAN'T EVEN CALL FOR HELP! I'M THE ONLY ONE IN THE WORLD WHO CARES FOR HIM—WHO KEEPS HIM ALIVE! PLEASE—PLEASE!
YOU WERE SICK OF LISTENING TO HER LYING DRIVEL, WEREN'T YOU? YOU WERE GLAD WHEN YOU FINALLY REACHED HER CELL WHEN THE JAILER OPENED IT.
I KNOW YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME! BUT GO WHERE WE LIVE...THE OLD SHACK ON STONE STREET ACROSS THE TRACKS! YOU'LL FIND HIM THERE WAITING FOR ME! DON'T LET HIM STARVE! GO AND HELP HIM! (SOB)
THE CELL DOOR CLANGED SHUT AND YOU TURNED AWAY COLDLY, LIONEL HART! YOU IGNORED HER SUPPLICATING HAND STRETCHED OUT TO YOU.
PLEASE! FOR THE SAKE OF AN OLD WOMAN! WILL YOU HELP MY POOR HENRY? OH PLEASE! PLEASE!
CUT IT OUT, SISTER! I'LL SEE YOU IN COURT!

YOU SLEPT WELL THAT NIGHT! AND IN COURT THE NEXT DAY, YOU HUSTLED HER THROUGH, SO SHE WOULDN'T WASTE THE JUDGE'S TIME WITH HER PACK OF LIES...

SIXTY DAYS! NEXT CASE!

LIEUTENANT! PLEASE! DON'T LET MY POOR HENRY STARVE!

TAKE HER AWAY, JAILER! SHE'S *ALL YOURS!*

YOU LEFT HER THEN, HART, TO BE THROWN IN A STEEL CELL. YOUR JOB WAS DONE! YOU DIDN'T BOTHER TO CHECK UP ON HER OBVIOUS LIES...IF YOU BELIEVED EVERYTHING THEY TOLD YOU, THE JAIL WOULD BE *EMPTY!* YOU NEVER GAVE A THOUGHT TO HER MISERY AND ANGUISH...

AND THEN YOU HEARD HOW SHE HAD BEEN RELEASED IN *ONE MONTH* FOR GOOD BEHAVIOR

HOW DO YOU *LIKE* THAT?! SHE'LL BE BACK TO SHOPLIFTING IN NO TIME!

YOU DECIDED TO SEE HER...TO WARN HER THAT YOU'D BE KEEPING AN EYE ON HER, THAT SHE'D BEST GO STRAIGHT!

BET SHE GAVE ME A PHONY. NO. THERE'S THE SHACK—JUST LIKE SHE *SAID!*

HMM...DOOR OPEN! SHE WAS FREED THIS AFTERNOON...SHOULD BE HERE SOON. I'LL WAIT INSIDE...SNOOP AROUND A BIT! NEVER CAN TELL.

YOU ENTERED THE DRAB LITTLE HOVEL, AND IN THE WAN LIGHT YOU TRIED TO PEER THROUGH THE DARKNESS OF THE ROOM. YOU OPENED A BUREAU DRAWER...

HMP! NOTHING VALUABLE *HERE!* GUESS SHE WAS TELLING THE TRUTH ABOUT BEING *POOR*, ANYWAY!

WHAT'S *THAT* DOOR?

YOU SWUNG OPEN THE CREAKY DOOR, HART! YOU SAW LITTLE IN THE DIM MOONLIGHT...BUT THEN SUDDENLY YOU *STIFFENED IN SHOCK!*

WHA—WHAT'S *THAT*!? A *WHEEL*...TWO...TWO *WHEELS!* OH, NO!

WHY DID YOUR EYES BULGE, LIEUTENANT? WHAT DID YOU SEE THAT SENT A SMASHING SHOCK-WAVE THROUGH YOUR BRAIN? WHAT RIPPED A MOANING GASP FROM YOUR LIPS, TURNED YOUR MUSCLES TO WATER AND MADE YOUR HEART THUD AGAINST YOUR RIBS LIKE A WILD THING?
NO... NO! NO! IT CAN'T BE!
BUT IT WAS! THE ONE THING YOU DIDN'T EXPECT OR WANT TO SEE! THE PROOF THAT THE OLD LADY HAD NOT LIED! THE PROOF SITTING IN THE WHEELCHAIR... NOT MOVING... SO VERY SILENT... SO VERY, VERY STILL...
HENRY!
YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO FEEL FOR HIS PULSE, HART... THAT HAD BEEN GONE A LONG TIME! YOU COULD TELL... THE CONDITION OF THE BODY... THE FOUL, SICKENING STENCH.
...DIED... HELPLESS! RIGHT IN... IN THE CHAIR!
HIS SIGHTLESS EYES ACCUSED YOU! IN ONE SICKENING MOMENT YOU SAW THIS PARALYZED OLD MAN... ALL ALONE... WAITING FOR THE ONE PERSON WHO COULD COME BACK AND SAVE HIM!
AND I... I PUT HER... BEHIND BARS!
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YOUR LIFE, YOU CRINGED. YOU WHIMPERED! STARKLY, IT FACED YOU... AND YOU HAD TO SPILL IT FROM YOUR LIPS BEFORE IT STRANGLED YOU!
I... I KILLED HIM!
THEN YOU HEARD THE SOUND BEHIND YOU.. THE SOFT STEP! YOU WHIRLED... AND THERE WAS THE LITTLE OLD LADY BACK FROM PRISON! WHAT WOULD SHE SAY?
WHY... HELLO, LIEUTENANT! HOW NICE TO FIND YOU HERE... KEEPING HENRY COMPANY!
DIDN'T SHE KNOW? COULDN'T SHE GUESS? YOU STOOD IN DUMB PANIC AS SHE BUSTLED OVER TO THE... THE THING IN THE WHEEL-CHAIR... BENT DOWN AND KISSED THE COLD CHEEK.
HELLO, HENRY DEAR! DID YOU THINK I'D NEVER COME BACK... IN TIME TO FEED YOU?

SHE SPOKE AS IF SHE HAD BEEN GONE *ONLY AN HOUR!* AS IF SHE HAD NETUNNED *QUICKLY* WITH THE FOOD HE HAD NEEDED..A *MONTH* AGO!

WON'T YDU HAVE SDME *TEA*, LIEUTENANT? IT'S ALL I CAN DFFER! YDU UNDENSTAND!

AH EN WHY. YES! YES, THANK YOU!

YDU GULPED DOWN THE BITTER CUP, YDUR MIND CHURNING IN REMORSE! HEN NEXT WORDS LASHED YOU LIKE A WHIP..

NOW I MUST *FEED* POOR HENRY!

SHE WAS *CRAZY!* BUT YOU HAD TO ATDNE TO MAKE AMENDS! YOU DREW A TEN DOLLAR BILL FRDM YDUR WALLET...

HERE, MADAM! PLEASE TAKE IT...*PLEASE!*

OH, I WON'T NEED *THAT!* HENRY'S MEAL IS TAKEN *CARE* OF ALREADY!

BUT WHY WERE YOUR ARMS SO *STIFF*, SUDDENLY? WHY DID YOUR MUSCLES SEEM TO *FREEZE*? AND THEN YDU HEARD HER SPEAK AGAIN, SO SWEETLY WITH THAT WARM, FRIENDLY SMILE

YOU SEE, I *POISONED* YOU, LIEUTENANT! IN THE TEA...*RAT POISON!* IT KILLS MEN *SLOWER* THAN NATS HEH, HEH! IT *PARALYZES* THEM FIRST!

ALL THE WAY HOME, I WAS *THINKING*...WHAT *CAN* I FEED POOR HENRY? HE'LL BE *SO* HUNGRY! *STARVED*, YOU MIGHT SAY AFTER A *WHOLE MONTH!* BUT WHEN I SAW YOU WAITING FOR ME HERE, IT CAME TO ME! HEH! IT WAS SO *SIMPLE!* SO *VERY* SIMPLE!

SO YDU SIT THERE, DETECTIVE-LIEUTENANT LIONEL "HAND" HART, YDUR FACE TWISTED.. WITH *PAIN!* YDUR MIND SEETHING WITH *AGONY!* YOUR *MUSCLES* ARE PARALYZED, BUT *NOT* YOUR *NERVES*.. DDWN IN YDUR *FEET* WHERE THE *CUTTING* STARTS! AND YDU STARE SO HELPLESSLY AT THE MONEY IN YOUR HANDS! THE *USELESS* MONEY THAT A *MONTH* AGO WDULD HAVE SAVED YDUR LIFE *TEN TIMES OVER!*

HEH, HEH! YDU SHALL *EAT WELL*, HENRY, DEAR... *NANANA!*

THE END

HEE, HEE! NOW WASN'T THAT *SWEET* OF THE OLD LADY TO FORGIVE ALL, AND HAVE HIM FOR *DINNER!* ANYWAY, THAT'S HOW HART ENDED UP IN THE *SOUP*. NOT TO MENTION THE *ENTREE* AND ALL THE *FIXINGS! DESSERT*, ANYONE? *HEY!* DON'T TURN *GREEN*...TURN THE *PAGE!*

OH! THIS *IS* THE *END* OF THE BOOK, ISN'T IT? WELL, TILL NEXT TIME, THEN... *BYEEE-EE!*

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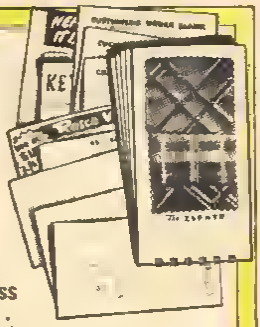

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